



# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Friday, June 27, 2008**

**08-82**

**SEATTLE MAN PLEADS GUILTY AND IS SENTENCED  
FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF AN OBSERVER ON A FISHING VESSEL**

Anchorage, Alaska – United States Attorney Nelson P. Cohen announced that on June 26, 2008, Lauti Fale Tuipala, a resident of Seattle, Washington, pled guilty and was sentenced in federal court in Anchorage for sexual harassment of an observer aboard a fishing vessel. Tuipala, who served 21 days in jail on the sexual harassment charge, was sentenced to 6 months of probation, with conditions that during the probationary period he pay the victim restitution of \$461, complete two hours of sexual harassment training approved by the U.S. Pretrial/Probation Services Office, and stay at least 50 yards away from the observer.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Deborah Smith imposed the sentence on Tuipala, a 33-year-old Washington resident who worked as a crew member aboard the *F/V Aleutian Spray*.

According to information presented to the court by Assistant United States Attorney Audrey J. Renschen, Tuipala sexually harassed the observer while on board the *Aleutian Spray* on March 21, 2008, in the Aleutian Islands, east of Atka Island, Alaska.

Mr. Cohen commended the National Marine Fisheries Service-Office for Enforcement (NMFS-OLE) for the investigation leading to the successful prosecution of Tuipala. Cohen stated, "Those observers labor in especially difficult conditions, and we hope to spread the word throughout the fishing industry in Alaska that sexual harassment of an observer is a crime treated very seriously by this office."

Martin Loefflad, Director of the NMFS Observer Program, stated, "NOAA Fisheries certified groundfish observers play a vital role in providing real-time scientific data for effective conservation and management of Alaska's fishery resources."

According to Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge Mike Adams, NMFS-OLE, "Regulations are designed to protect observers from any form of harassment that could undermine their ability to collect that information. These regulations acknowledge that because of lengthy at-sea deployments and close-quarters situations in which they live and work, observers are uniquely vulnerable. Protecting the safety and well-being of observers is the highest priority of NOAA's Alaska Enforcement Division."

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